Guy Smoot
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Professor Roilos
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The Song of Armoures:
Translation and Commentary

When I started this project and had already completed an initial translation of the poem, I thought that no one else before me had ever translated *The Song of Armoures* into English before me. In the course of my research, however, I discovered, somewhat disappointingly, that David Ricks had already translated the lay into English.[1] I was consoled by the fact that two variants of the text based on manuscripts both dating to the 15th century—one known as the P manuscript found in Saint Petersburg and the other one known as the C manuscript found in Constantinople—allow the translator to provide a unique edition and translation of the poem through the choice of his or her variant when the two manuscripts differ. In terms of style, I have departed from most conventional translations into English in that I have endeavored, as often as possible, to replicate the original syntax of the original, provided that the resultant clarity of the text in English is not compromised. I have also endeavored to be as literal as possible, to the extent that being literal does not jeopardize intelligibility and the original meaning of the text.

My commentary is linear, though I have often found it necessary to use one particular line as a launchpad to discuss a theme or pattern sometimes scattered

[1] Ricks 1990: 170-183.

throughout the entirety of the lay. This is a work in progress and is by no means exhaustive. More energy and research have gone into the first part of the poem, and less into the second part. I ran out of time to look thoroughly into a number of interesting aspects of the poem, notably patterns in the repetition of formulas. I also did not consult as much of the secondary literature as I should, in part because most of them are written in Modern Greek and I am slow to read Modern Greek. I hope, nevertheless, that a number of my insights are compelling and can be further developed for future research.

A) TRANSLATION

Title of Poem:
Του Ἀρμούρη
[the Song] of Armoures

Σήμερον ἄλλος οὐρανός, σήμερον ἄλλη ἡμέρα, 1
Today another sky, today another day

σήμερον τὰ ἀρχοντόπουλα θέλουν καβαλλικεύσει· 2
Today the sons of the commanders will ride

μόνον τοῦ κὺρ Ἀρμούρη ὁ υἱὸς οὐδὲν καβαλλικεύει. 3
Only lord Armoures' son does not ride.

Καὶ τότε πάλε τὸ παιδὶν (εἰ)'ς τὴν μάνναν του ὑπαγαίνει: 4
And then back to his mother the child goes

«Μάννα, νὰ πιχαρῇς τ᾽ ἀδέλφια μου, 5
"Mother, may you rejoice in my brothers,

νὰ ἰδῇς καὶ τὸν πατέρα μου, μάννα, ἂς καββαλικεύσω». 6
May you even see my father, mother, if I should ride"

Καὶ τότε πάλιν ἡ μάννα τοῦ Ἀρμούρην συντυχαίνει: 7
And then in turn the mother to Armoures replies:

«Ἐσὺ μικρὸν καὶ ἀνέλικον, καβάλλα δὲν σὲ πρέπει. 8
You are small and under age, horseriding does not befit you.

Ἀμμὴ ἂν θέλῃς, υἱὲ καλέ, διὰ νὰ καβαλλικεύσῃς, 9
But if you wish, good son, to ride,

ἀπάνω κρέμεται τὸ κοντάριν τοῦ πατρός σου, 10
Up above hangs the spear of your father,

τὸ ἅρπαξεν ὁ κύρης σου ἐκ τὴν Βαβυλωνίαν, 11
which your father lord carried off from Babylonia,

ἀπάνω κάτω ὁλόχρυσον διὰ λίθου μαργαριτάρι· 12
from top to bottom all of gold encrusted with pearls

καὶ ἂν τὸ λυγίσῃς μιὰν φοράν, καὶ ἂν τὸ λυγίσῃς δύο, 13
And if you bend it once, and if you bend it twice,

καὶ ἂν τὸ λυγίσῃς τρεῖς φορές, τότε νὰ καβαλλικεύσῃς». 14
And if you bend it three times, then ride a horse!

Καὶ τότε πάλε τὸ παιδίν, τὸ μικρὸν Ἀρμουροπούλιν, 15
And then again the child, Armoures' little kid,

κλαίοντας ἀνεβαίνει τὴν σκάλαν, γελῶντας κατεβαίνει. 16
Weeping goes up the stairs, laughing comes down.

Προτοῦ τὸ πιάσῃ ἐπιάνετον, προτοῦ τὸ σείσῃ ἐσειέτον, 17
Before he grabs it, it was grabbed, before he shakes it, it was shaken.

εἰς τὸν βραχίονα του τό ῾δεσεν, ἐσείστη, ἐλυγίστη. 18
To his arm he bound it, it was shaken, it was bent.

Καὶ τότε πάλιν τὸ παιδὶν εἰς τὴν μάνναν του ὑπαγαίνει. 19
And then back to his mother the child goes.

«Θέλεις, θέλεις, μάννα μου, ὀμπρός σου νὰ τὸ τσακίσω;» 20
Do you want, dear mom, want me to break it in front of you?

Καὶ τότε πάλιν ἡ μάννα του τοὺς ἄρχοντας ἐλάλει: 21
And then in turn his mom to the commanders spoke:

«Ἄμετε, ἰδέτε, οἱ ἄρχοντες, καὶ στρώσετε τὸν μαῦρον· 22
Come, look, commanders, and saddle up the black horse:

στρώσετε, χαλινώσετε, τὸν μαῦρον τοῦ πατρός του, 23
Saddle up, bridle up the horse of his father,

ὁποὺ ἔχει χρόνους δώδεκα, σιμὰ εἰς νερὸν οὐδὲν ἐπῆε, 24
it has been twelve years since he went up to the water,

ὁποὺ ἔχει χρόνους δώδεκα, οὐδὲν καβαλλικεύθη, 25
it has been twelve years since he was ridden upon

καὶ τρώγει τὸ καρφοπέταλον, στέκει παλουκουμένον». 26
and he gnaws at the bit, remains tied to a stake.

Ἐδιέβησαν οἱ ἄρχοντες καὶ στρώνουν του τὸν μαῦρον, 27
The commanders went and saddled his horse,

ἔδωκεν εἰς τοὺς βραχίονες του καὶ εὑρέθη καβαλλάρης. 28
He used his arms and lo, in him was found a horseman!

Ὥστε νὰ εἰπῇ «ἔχετε ὑγείαν», ἐδιέβη τριάντα μίλια, 29
No sooner had he said "farewell," than he covered thirty miles

ὥστε νὰ τὸν ἐπιλογηθοῦν, ἐδιέβη ἑξῆντα πέντε. 30
No sooner had they responded than he covered sixty five.

Ἐκεῖ ἐδιὲ καὶ ἀνεβοκατέβαινε ἀντίπερα τὸν Ἀφράτην, 31
Yonder he sped and rode up and down the bank of the Euphrates,

ἀνέβη καὶ ἐκατέβη τον, καὶ πόρον οὐδὲν εὑρίσκει. 32
Up and down he rode, and he finds no ford.

Σαρακηνὸς ἐστέκετον, στέκει, ἀναγελᾷ τον: 33
A Saracen stopped, stood, and mocked him:

«Σαρακηνοὶ ἔχουσιν φαρία, ὁποὺ διώχνουν τοὺς ἀέρες, 34
the Saracens have steeds that chase the winds,

τὴν φάσαν καὶ τὴν πέρδικα ἀπὸ πτεροῦ τὴν παίρνουν, 35
The pigeon and the partridge by the wing they catch,

καὶ τὸν λαγὸν (εἰ)ς τὸν ἀνήφορον ἀπὸ δρομοῦ τὸν σώνουν, 36
And the hare in a race uphill they overtake,

κρατοῦν καὶ κολακεύουν τα καὶ ἐλεύθερα τὰ ἀφίνουν, 37
They seize and restrain them and set them free,

καὶ πάλε δὲ ὅταν τοὺς φανῇ, τρέχουσιν, πιάνουσίν τα,
and again whenever they see fit, they run, they catch them

καὶ τὸν Ἀφράτην ποταμὸν οὐκ ἠμποροῦν περᾶσαι,
and the Euphrates river they don't get to cross,

καὶ ἐσὺ μὲ τὸ παρίππιν σου θέλεις νὰ τὸν περάσῃς;»
and you with your nag want to cross it?

Τὸ νὰ τ᾽ ἀκούσῃ ὁ νεώτερος πολλὴν μανίαν ἐπῆρεν·
This as soon as the youth heard, he was filled with wrath

πτερνιστηρέαν τὸν μαῦρον του, διὰ νὰ περάσῃ πέρα.
He spurs on his horse, so that he may ford the ford

Ἦταν ὁ Ἀφράτης δυνατός, ἦτον καὶ βουρκωμένος,
But the Euphrates was strong, and it was slimy,

εἶχεν καὶ κύματα βαρέα, ἦτον καὶ ἀποχυμένος,
And it had grievous waves, and it had overflown,

πτερνιστηρέαν τὸν μαῦρον του κρούει τον καὶ ὑπάγει,
He spurs on his horse, strikes it and crosses over

στριγγιὰν φωνὴν ἀνέσυρεν, ὅσην καὶ ἂν ἐδυνέτον:
With a piercing voice he shouted at the top of his lungs:

«Εὐχαριστῶ σε, Θεὲ καλέ, καὶ μυριοευχαριστῶ σε,
I thank you, good God, and thank you ten thousand times

ἐσὺ μὲ ἐδῶκες τὴν ἀνδρείαν καὶ μὲ τὴν παίρνει τώρα».
You gave me manliness and it take it away from me now.

Ἀγγελικὴ φωνὴ τοῦ ἦλθεν ἐξ οὐρανοῦ ἀπάνω:
to him came an angelic voice from the sky on high:

« Μπῆξε τὸ κονταράκιν σου 'ς τῆς φοινικέας τὴν ρίζαν,
"Plant your spear into the palm tree's root,

καὶ μπῆξε καὶ τὰ ροῦχα σου ὀμπρὸς εἰς τὸ μπροστοκούρβιν,
And hang your clothes in the front, on the saddle's pommel,

κέντεσε καὶ τὸν μαῦρον σου καὶ νὰ περάσῃς πέρα».
And impel your horse so that he may ford the ford

Πτερνιστηρέαν τὸν μαῦρον του κ᾽ ἐπέρασέ τον πέρα. 53
He spurred on his horse and he forded the ford.

Οὐχὶ ν᾽ ἀφήσῃ κἂν τὰ ροῦχα του ὁ νέος νὰ στεγνώσουν, 54
Without letting his clothes dry, the youth

πτερνιστηρέαν τὸν μαῦρον του, εἰς τὸν Σαρακηνὸν ὑπάγει, 55
Spurs on his horse, heads for the Saracen

καὶ σφόνδυλον τὸν ἔδωσε καὶ ἐξεσαγόνιασέ τον: 56
and gave him a punch and dislocated his jaw:

«Εἰπέ, μωρὲ Σαρακηνέ, ποῦ ἔναι τὰ φουσσᾶτα;» 57
Tell me, stupid Saracen, where is the army?

Καὶ τότε ὁ Σαρακηνὸς τοῦ Ἀρμούρη συντυχαίνει: 58
So then the Saracen replies to Armoures:

«Θεέ μου, σαλὰ ρωτήματα, τὰ ἔχουν οἱ ἀνδρειωμένοι, 59
My God, foolish questions the brave have,

πρῶτα νὰ κροῦν τὲς σφονδυλεὲς καὶ τότε νὰ ρωτοῦσιν. 60
So that they first hit with their fists and then ask questions

Μὰ τὸν κὺρ ἥλιον τὸν γλυκύν, μὰ τὴν γλυκεῖαν του μάννα, 61
By the Lord the sweet Sun, by his sweet mother,

ἐψὲς ἐξεδιαλέχθημεν κἂν ἑκατὸν χιλιάδες, 62
Yesterday, a hundred thousand of us were select warriors,

ὅλοι καλοὶ καὶ ἐκλεκτοὶ πρασινοσκουταρᾶτοι, 63
All good and choice men with green bucklers,

ἔνι καὶ ἄνδρες δυνατοὶ οὐδὲ χιλίους φοβοῦνται, 64
And they are mighty men, nor thousands do they fear each,

οὐδὲ χιλίους, οὐδὲ μυρίους, οὐδὲ ὅσοι τοὺς ἀπαντήσουν». 65
Not thousands, nor tens of thousands, no matter how many they meet.

Πτερνιστηρέαν τὸν μαῦρον του, ἄνω εἰς βουνὶν ἀνέβη, 66
He spurred on his horse and up the hill he went,

φουσάτα εἶδεν κ᾽ ἐγνώμιασεν ἀριφνισμὸν οὐκ ἔχει. 67
He saw the army and thought it was beyond counting.

Καὶ τότε πάλε τὸ παιδὶν ανογᾶται, λέγει: 68
And then in turn the child thinks and says:

«Ἂν τοὺς πηδήσω ἀρμάτωτους, πάντα καυχᾶσθαι θέλουν, 69
If I attack them when they are unarmed, always will they boast

ὅτι τοὺς ηὗρα ἀρμάτωτους καὶ ἐπῆρα τους τὴ πρόβαν». 70
That I found them unarmed and captured them as a traitor

Στριγγιὰν φωνὴν ἐλάλησεν, ὅσον καὶ ἂν ἐδύνετον: 71
With a piercing voice he shouted at the top of his lungs:

«Σαρακηνοί, ἀρματώνεσθε, σκυλιά, λουρικωθῆτε 72
Saracens, arm yourselves, dogs, put on your breastplates,

λουρικωθῆτε γλήγορα, σκυλιὰ μαγαρισμένα, 73
Put on your breastplates quickly, filthy dogs,

εἰς ἀπιστίαν μὴ τό ῾χετε ὅτι ἀπέρασεν ὁ Ἀρμούρης 74
so that you may have no doubt that the son of Armoures crossed over,

ὁ Ἀρμούρης ὁ Ἀρμουρόπουλος τ᾽ Ἀρμούρη ὁ υἱὸς ὁ Ἀρέστης. 75
Armoures, Armoures' kid, even Armoures' son, the Fitting one.

Μὰ τὸν κὺρ ἥλιον τὸν γλυκύν, μὰ τὴν γλυκείαν του μάννα, 76
By the Lord the sweet Sun, by his sweet mother,

ὅσ᾽ ἄστρη εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ φύλλα εἰς τὰ δένδρη, 77
As many as the stars in the sky and the leaves on trees,

οὕτως ἐκαταπέσασιν οἱ σέλλες εἰς τοὺς μαύρους. 78
So many saddles fell down on the horses.

῾Έστρωσαν καὶ ἐχαλίνωσαν, πηδοῦν, καβαλλικεύουν. 79
They set it up and bridled it, leap, ride.

Καὶ τότε πάλιν τὸ παιδὶν καὶ αὐτὸ καλοταρίστη. 80
And then in turn the child himself was ready.

῾Ωραῖον σπαθίτζιν ἔσυρε ἀπὸ ἀργυρὸν φηκάριν, 81
A beautiful sword he drew from his silver sheath,

᾽ς τὸν οὐρανὸν τὸ ἀπέταξεν, ς τὸ χέριν του τὸ δέχθη. 82
Into the sky he threw it, in his hand it landed.

Πτερνιστηρέαν τὸν μαῦρον του, ἐκεῖ κοντὰ ζυγώνει: 83
He stirs on his horse, and draws near:

«Ἀπὸ τὸ γένος διαβῶ, ἂν σᾶς ἀλησμονήσω». 84
May I forsake my family if I forget you.

Καὶ συγκροτάει πόλεμου καλὰ, ἀνδρειωμένα, 85
And he clashes in battle beautifully, the brave one,

τὲς ἄκρες, ἄκρες ἔκοπτε, ἡ μέση ἐδαπανᾶτον. 86
at the wings, the wings he struck, the middle was wasted

Μὰ τὸν κὺρ ἥλιον τὸν γλυκύν, μὰ τὴν γλυκεῖαν του μάννα, 87
By the Lord, the sweet Sun, by his sweet Mother,

ὅλη μέρα τοὺς ἔκοπτε τὴν ἀνωποταμίαν, 88
All day them he struck upstream,

καὶ ὅλη νύκτα τοὺς ἔκοπτε τὴν κατωποταμίαν. 89
And all night them he struck downstream.

Ἔθεσε καὶ ἀποθέσεν τους, κανέναν δὲν ἀφῆκε. 90
He charged and charged them again, and not one did he spare.

Ἀπέζεψε ὁ νεώτερος νὰ τὸν βαρήσῃ ὁ ἀέρας, 91
The youth dismounted so that the breeze could relieve him.

καὶ ἕνα Σαρακηνὸ σκυλίν, σκυλὶν μαγαρισμένον, 92
And one Saracen dog, a filthy dog,

ἐγκρύμματα τὸν ἔβαλεν καὶ ἐπῆρε του τὸν μαῦρον, 93
lay in ambush and took his horse,

ἐγκρύμματα τὸν ἔβαλε καὶ ἐπῆρε τὸ ραβδίν του. 94
lay in ambush and took his club.

Μὰ τὸν κὺρ ἥλιον γλυκύν, μὰ τὴν γλυκείαν του μάννα, 95
By the lord the sweet sun, by his sweet mother,

σαράντα μίλια τὸν ἐδίωχνε πεζὸς μὲ τὰ γονάτια, 96
Forty miles him he chased on foot with his knees,

καὶ ἄλλα σαράντα τέσσαρα πεζὸς μὲ τὸ λουρίκιμ, 96b
and another forty four on foot with his breastplate,

ἐκεῖ τὸν ἐκατέφθασε εἰς τῆς Συρίας τὴν πόρταν, 97
Behold, him he overtakes at Syria's gates,

καὶ ἐβγαίνει τὸ σπαθίτσι του καὶ παίρνει του τὸ χέριν: 98
and unsheathes his sword and lops off his hand:

«Ἄμε καὶ σύ, Σαρακηνέ, νὰ πῇς κ᾽ ἐσὺ μαντᾶτο». 99
"Go now, Saracen, so that you may convey the message."

Ὁ κύρης του ἔξω κάθητο εἰς τῆς φυλακῆς τὴν πόρταν, 100
His father lord sat apart by the gate of the prison,

τὸν μαῦρον του ἀνεγνώρισεν καὶ τὸ ραβδὶν τοῦ υἱοῦ του, 101
His horse he recognized and the club of his son,

τὸν καβαλλάρην οὐδὲν θωρεῖ καὶ πὰ νὰ βγῇ ἡ ψυχή του. 102
the horseman he didn't see and his soul is about to go.

Βαρέα βαρέα ἀναστέναξεν καὶ ἐσείστη ὁ πύργος ὅλος. 103
Heavily heavily he groaned and the whole tower shook.

Καὶ τότε πάλιν ὁ ἀμιρᾶς τοὺς ἄρχοντες ἐλάλει: 104
And again the emir to the commanders spoke:

«Ἄμετ ἰδέτε, οἱ ἄρχοντες, τί ἔχει καὶ ἀναστενάζει; 105
Go and see, o commanders, what he has and why he groans

Ἂν ἔν τὸ γιόμα του κακόν, νὰ φάγῃ ἐκ τὸ δικό μου, 106
If his meal is bad, let him eat from my own,

εἴτ ἔναι τὸ οἰνάριν του, νὰ πίῃ ἐκ τὸ δικό μου, 107
if it is his wine, let him drink from my own

εἴτε βρωμᾷ ἡ φυλακή, νὰ τὴν μοσχοκαπνίσουν, 108
if his cell reeks, may they spray fragrance in it,

εἴτ᾽ εἶναι βαρέα τὰ σίδερα, νὰ τὰ λαφροκοπήσουν». 109
if his irons are heavy, may they be made lighter."

Καὶ τότε πάλε ὁ Ἀρμούρης τοὺς ἄρχοντας ἐλάλει: 110
And then in turn Armoures to the commanders spoke:

«Οὐδ᾽ ἔν τὸ γιόμα μου κακόν, νὰ φάγω ἐκ τὸ δικόν του, 111
My meal is not bad, that I should eat from his own.

οὐδὲ τὸ οἰνάριν μου κακόν, νὰ πίω ἐκ τὸ δικόν του,
Nor is my wine bad, that I should drink from his own.

οὐδ᾽ ἔν βαρέα τὰ σίδερα, νὰ τὰ λαφροκοπήσουν.
Nor are the irons heavy, that they should make them lighter.

Τὸν μαῦρον ἀνεγνώρισα καὶ τὸ ραβδὶν τοῦ υἱοῦ μου,
I recognized the horse and the club of my son,

τὸν καβαλλάρην οὐδὲν θωρῶ καὶ ὑπὰ νὰ ἐβγῇ ἡ ψυχή μου».
I do not see the horseman and my soul is about to go."

Καὶ τότε πάλε ὁ ἀμιρᾶς τὸν Ἀρμούρην ἐλάλει:
And then in turn the emir to Armoures spoke :

«Καρτέρεσε, Ἀρμούρη μου, καρτέρεσε ὀλίγον,
Take heart, my Armoures, take heart a little,

νὰ δώσουν τὰ ὄργανα βαρέα, τὰ βούκινα μεγάλα,
May they blow the heavy instruments, the big bugles,

νὰ μαζωχθῇ ἡ Βαβυλωνιὰ καὶ ὅλη ἡ Καππαδοκία,
And summon Babylonia and all of Cappadocia

καὶ ὅπου καὶ ἂν ἔνι ὁ υἱόκας σου
and wherever your son should be,

πιστάγκωνα καὶ ἐξάγκωνα ὀμπρός σου νὰ τὸν φέρουν.
With his hands behind his back, handcuffed before you, may they bring him.

Ἀνέμενε, ὁ Ἀρμούρης μου, ἀνέμενε ἄλλον ὀλίγον».
Wait, my Armoures, wait just a little longer."

Καὶ ἔδωσαν τὰ ὄργανα βαρέα, τὰ βούκινα μεγάλα,
And they blew the heavy instruments, the big bugles,

νὰ μαζωχθῇ ἡ Βαβυλωνία καὶ ἡ Καππαδοκία·
To summon Babylonia and Cappadocia.

τινὰς οὐκ ἠμαζώνετον, μόνον ὁ κουτζοχέρης.
No one gathered, only the one-handed man.

Καὶ τότε πάλιν ὁ ἀμιρᾶς τοῦ κουτζοχέρη ἐλάλει:
And then in turn the emir to the one-handed man spoke:

«Εἰπές, μωρὲ Σαρακηνέ, ποῦ ἔναι τὰ φουσσᾶτα;» 127
Tell me, stupid Saracen, where is the army?

Καὶ τότε ὁ Σαρακηνὸς τὸν ἀμιρᾶν ἐλάλει: 128
And then the Saracen to the Emir spoke:

«Ἀνέμενε, ὁ αὐθέντης μου, ἀνέμενε ἄλλον ὀλίγον, 129
Wait, my master, wait just a little longer,

νὰ φέρουν φῶς τὰ ὀμμάτια μου καὶ τῆς ψυχῆς μου ἀέρα, 130
That they may bring light to my eyes and air to my soul

νὰ μαχθῇ τὸ αἷμα μου εἰς τὸ καλόν μου χέριν, 131
That my blood may irrigate my good hand

καὶ τότε νὰ σ᾽ ἀφηγηθῶ τὸ ποῦ ἔναι τὰ φουσσᾶτα. 132
And then may I relate to you where the army is.

Μὰ τὴν ἀλήθειαν, ἄρχοντες, ἄστοχα σᾶς τὸ λέγω. 133
In truth, o commanders, your failures are what I tell.

Ὀψὲς ἐξεδιαλέχθημεν κἂν ἑκατὸν χιλιάδες, 134
Yesterday a hundred thousand of us were select warriors,

ὅλοι καλοὶ καὶ ἐκλεκτοὶ πρασινοσκουταρᾶτοι, 135
They were all good, choice men with green bucklers

ἦσαν καὶ τέτοιοι ἀπὸ ἐκείνους, χιλίους οὐδὲν ἐφοβοῦνταν, 136
and they were such among those not fearing thousands,

οὐδὲ χιλίους, οὐδὲ μυρίους, οὐδὲ ὅσοι τοὺς ἀπαντοῦσαν. 137
Not thousands, nor tens of thousands nor however many met them.

Μικρὸν παιδὶν ἐφάνηκεν ἀπάνω εἰς ἄγριον ὄρος, 138
A small child appeared, up high on a wild mountain

στριγγίαν φωνὶτζαν ἔσυρεν, ὅσην καὶ ἂν ἐδυνέτον: 139
With a piercing little voice he shouted at the top of his lungs:

«Σαρακηνοί, ἀρματώνεσθε, σκυλία, λουρικωθῆτε, 140
“Saracens, arm yourselves, dogs, put your breastplates on,

εἰς ἀπιστίαν μὴ τὸ ἔχετε ὅτι ἀπέρασεν ὁ Ἀρμούρης, 141
So that you may have no doubt that the son of Armouris crossed over,

ὁ Ἀρμούρης ὁ Ἀρμουρόπουλος τ᾽ Ἀρμούρη ὁ υἱὸς ὁ Ἀρέστης. 142
Armoures, Armoures' kid, even Armoures' son, the Fitting one.

Μὰ τὸν κὺρ ἥλιον τὸν γλυκύν, μὰ τὴν γλυκεῖαν του μάνναν, 143
By the lord the sweet sun, by his sweet mother,

ὅσα ἄστρα εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ φύλλα εἰς τὰ δένδρη, 144
As many as the stars in the sky and the leaves on the trees,

οὕτως ἐκαταπέσασιν οἱ σέλλες εἰς τοὺς μαύρους. 145
So many saddles fell down on the horses.

Ἔστρωσαν κ᾽ ἐχαλίνωσαν, πηδοῦν, καβαλλικεύουν. 146
They set up and bridled, leapt, rode.

Καὶ τότε πάλι τὸ παιδὶν καὶ αὐτὸ καλοταρίστη. 147
And then in turn even the child himself was ready.

Ὡραῖον σπαθίτζιν ἔσυρε ἀπ᾽ ἀργυρὸν φηκάριν, 149
A beautiful sword he drew from his silver sheath,

᾽ς τὸν οὐρανὸν τ᾽ ἀπέταξεν, ᾽ς τὸ χέριν του τὸ ἐδέχθη. 150
to the sky he threw it, and in his hand it landed.

Πτερνιστηρέαν τὸν μαῦρον του ἐκεῖ κοντὰ ζυγώνει: 151
He spurs on his and draws near:

«Ἀπὸ τὸ γένος του διαβῶ, ἂν σᾶς ἀλησμονήσω.» 152
"May my family disown me if I forget you."

Τὲς ἄκρες ἄκρες ἔκοπτεν καὶ ἡ μέση ἐδαπανᾶτον. 153
From the wings, the wings he struck and the middle was wasted.

Μὰ τὸν κὺρ ἥλιον τὸν γλυκύν, μὰ τὴν γλυκεῖαν του μάνναν, 154
By the lord, the sweet sun, by his sweet mother,

ὅλη μέρα μᾶς ἔκοπτεν τὴν ἀνωποταμίαν, 155
All day us he struck upstream,

καὶ ὅλη νύκτα μᾶς ἔκοπτε τὴν κατωποταμίαν. 156
And all night us he struck downstream.

Ἔθεσε καὶ ἀπόθεσεν μας, κανέναν οὐδὲν ἀφίνει. 157
He charged and charged us again, and not one does he spare.

Καὶ ἐπέζευσεν ὁ νεώτερος διὰ νὰ τὸν δώσῃ ὁ ἀέρας,
And the youth dismounted so that the air could relieve him.

καὶ ἐγὼ ὡς καλὸς καὶ φρόνιμος ἐγκρύμματα τὸν βάνω,
And I being noble and clever set out to ambush him,

ἐγκρύμματα τὸν ἔβαλα καὶ ἐπῆρα του τὸν μαῦρον.
An ambush I laid and I took his horse.

ἐπῆρα του τὸν μαῦρον του, ἐπῆρα τὸ ραβδίν του.
I took his black horse, I took his club.

Μὰ τὸν κὺρ ἥλιον τὸν γλυκύν, μὰ τὴν γλυκεῖαν του μάνναν,
By the lord the sweet sun, by his sweet mother,

σαράντα μίλια μὲ ἐδίωχνεν πεζὸς μὲ τὰ γονάτια,
For forty miles me he chased on foot with his knees,

καὶ ἄλλα σαράντα τέσσαρα πεζὸς μὲ τὸ λουρίκιν.
And another forty four on foot with his breastplate.

Ἐδῶ κοντὰ μὲ ἔφθασεν εἰς τῆς Συρίας τὴν πόρταν,
Here he caught up with me at Syria's gates,

καὶ σύρνει τὸ σπαθίτσιν του καὶ παίρνει μου τὸ χέριν:
And draws his sword and lops off my hand:

«Ἄμε καὶ ἐσύ, Σαρακηνέ, νὰ εἰπῇς κ᾽ ἐσὺ μαντᾶτον».
Now go, Saracen, that you may tell the message."

Καὶ τότε πάλιν ὁ ἀμιρᾶς τὸν Ἀρμούρην ἐλάλει:
And then in turn the emir spoke to Armoures:

«Καλὰ εἶναι αὐτά, ὁ Ἀρμούρης μου, τὰ κάμνει ὁ υἱός σου;»
"Noble are those things, my Armoures, that your son does?

Καὶ τότε πάλιν ὁ Ἀρμούρης μου ὡραῖον χαρτίτζιν γράφει,
And then in return my Armouris writes a beautiful letter,

μὲ τὸ πουλὶν τὸ ἔστειλεν, τ᾽ ὡραῖον χιλιδονάκι:
with a bird he sent it, a beautiful swallow:

«Εἰπὲ τῆς σκύλας τὸν υἱόν, τῆς ἀνομίας τὸ τέκνον,
tell the bitch's son, the illegitimate child,

ὅπου εὕρῃ Σαρακηνὸν νὰ τὸν ἐλεημονᾶται, 172
wherever he should find a Saracen, to show him mercy,

μὴ λάχῃ εἰς τὰς χεῖρας του καὶ ἐλεημοσύν᾽ οὐκ ἔχει». 173
lest he should fall into his hands and he shows no mercy."

Καὶ τότε πάλιν τὸ παιδὶν ὡραῖον χαρτίτζιν γράφει, 174
And then in turn the child writes a beautiful letter,

μὲ τὸ πουλὶν τὸ ἔστειλεν, τὸ ὡραῖον χιλιδονάκιν: 175
With an animal he sent it, a beautiful swallow:

«Εἰπέτε τὸν αὐθέντη μου καὶ τὸν γλυκύν μου κύρην, 176
Tell my master and my sweet father lord,

ἕως οὗ βλέπω τὰ ὁσπίτια μου διπλομανταλωμένα, 177
As long as I can see my house double-bolted,

ἕως οὗ βλέπω τὴν μάνναν μου τὰ μαῦρα φορεσμένην, 178
As long as I can see my mother in black dressed,

καὶ βλέπω καὶ τὰ ἀδέλφια μου τὰ μαῦρα φορεμένα, 179
and can see my siblings in black dressed,

ὅπου καὶ ἂν εὕρω Σαρακηνὸν τὸ αἷμα του νὰ πίνω. 180
Wherever I find a Saracen, his blood I will drink.

Καὶ ἂν μὲ παραμανιώσουσιν, εἰς τὴν Συρίαν νὰ πέσω, 181
And if me they drive to wrath, upon Syria I will descend,

τὰ στενορύμια τῆς Συρίας κεφάλια νὰ γεμίσω, 182
The narrow streets of Syria with heads will I fill,

τὰ ξηρορυάκια τῆς Συρίας αἷμα νὰ τὰ γεμίσω». 183
the dry riverbeds of Syria with blood will I fill."

Τὸ νὰ τὰ ἀκούσῃ ὁ ἀμιρᾶς, πολλὰ τὸν ἐφοβήθη. 184
This as soon as the emir heard, much he feared.

Καὶ τότε πάλε ὁ ἀμιρᾶς τοὺς ἄρχοντας ἐλάλει: 185
And then in turn the emir to the commanders spoke:

«Ἀμέτε, ἀμέτε, οἱ ἄρχοντες, ἐβγάλετε τὸν Ἀρμούρην, 186
Go, go, commanders, let Armoures out,

καὶ ἀμέτε τον εἰς τὸ λουτρόν, διὰ νὰ λουστῇ ν᾽ ἀλλάξῃ,
And make him go to the bath, that he may bathe and change,

εἰς τὸ γιόμαν μου τὸν φέρετε, νὰ φάγῃ μετ᾽ ἐμένα».
to my meal bring him, that he may share in the repast.

Ἐδιέβησαν οἱ ἄρχοντες καὶ ἐβγάνουν τὸν Ἀρμούρην,
Off went the commanders and out they let Armoures,

ἐβγάνουν τονἐκ τὰ σίδερα καὶ ἐκ τὰ βαρέα χερόψια,
They let him out of his irons and out of his heavy handcuffs,

εἰς τὸ λουτρὸν ἐδιάβησαν κ᾽ ἐλούστη καὶ ἀλλάσσει,
To the bath they went and he was washed and changes,

εἰς τὸν ἀμιρᾶν ἐδιάβησαν κ᾽ ἐγεύθη μετ᾽ ἐκεῖνον.
To the emir they went and he was regaled with him.

Καὶ τότε πάλιν ὁ ἀμιρᾶς τὸν Ἀρμούρην ἐλάλει:
And then in turn the emir to Armoures spoke:

«Ἄμε, ἄμε, ὁ Ἀρμούρης μου, ἄμε εἰς τὰ γονικά σου,
Go, go, my Armoures, go to your ancestral land

καὶ παίδευε καὶ τὸ παιδίν, γαμπρὸν τὸν θέλω πάρει(ν),
and teach even your child, my son-in-law him I wish to be,

οὐδὲ εἰς τὴν ἀνεψίαν μου, οὐδὲ εἰς τὴν ἐξαδέλφην,
Not my cousin I give to him, not my niece,

μόνον εἰς τὴν θυγατέρα μου, τὴν ἔχω φῶς καὶ μάτια.
but my very own daughter, whom I love as my light and as my eyes.

Καὶ παίδευέ το τὸ παιδίν ὅπου καὶ ἂν εὕρῃ Σαρακηνόν,
And teach the child wherever he should find a Saracen,

νὰ τὸν ἐλεημονᾶται, καὶ ἂν λάχῃ κέρδος τίποτες,
To show him mercy, and if he happened upon any plunder

ἀντάμα νὰ τὸ μοιράζουν, καὶ νά ῾ναι ἀγαπημένοι».
together we should share it, and we should love one another."

B) COMMENTARY

1-2 Σήμερον ἄλλος οὐρανός, σήμερον ἄλλη ἡμέρα,

σήμερον τὰ ἀρχοντόπουλα θέλουν καβαλλικεύσει·

Thanopoulos' monograph on the formulaic language of the poem has shown that the entire SA is made up of phrases or specific combination of words that can also be found in other texts of Medieval and Modern Greek folk poetry: such concordances can be termed "oral formulas." It would be tedious and unprofitable to go through all of Th.'s examples but suffice it to look at the comparanda for the very first two lines, in order to get an idea of the great oral system to which SA belongs:

> Βυθ.-Παχτ. 132:
> Σήμερις ἄλλος οὐρανός σήμερα ἄλλη ᾽μέρα
> σήμερις στεφανώνεται ἀετός τήν περιστέρα
>
> Κύπρ.-'Akad. 82, 1–2
> Σήμερον ἐσυννέφκιασεν, σήμερον ἐν ᾽νά βρέξη.
> σἠμμερον τό Σκληρόπουλλον ἐν ᾽νά καβαλλιτζέψη
>
> Πόντος-Λαμψ. 124:
> Σήμερον ἄλλο ἡμέρα ἐν᾽ καί ἄλλο ἥλλος λάμπει
> σήμερον καί τό κοράσον δύο καρδίας βάλλει
>
> Κύπρ.῀ Πετρ. 135:
> Σἠμμερ΄ ἀλλάσ᾽ ὁ οὐρανός, σήμερ΄ ἀλλάσσ᾽ ἡ μέρα,
> σήμερα στεφανώννουμε ἀτόν τζαί περιστέραν
>
> Κάρπαθ.-Μαρτίνης 69:
> Σήμερον μαύρος οὐρανός, σήμερο μαύρη μέρα
> σήμερον ἐσταυρώσασι τό πάντω βασιλέα

The juxtaposition of οὐρανός and ἡμέρα in line 1 provides a spatio-temporal setting for the poem whereby οὐρανός situates it in space and ἡμέρα in time. At the same time, the juxtaposition highlights the otherwise taken for granted complementarity and metonymy of "the day" and "the sky," which historically give rise to one another: the Latin *dies* 'day', for instance, is related to the phrase *sub diuo* "under the

sky." Of course, it was not necessary after saying Σήμερον ἄλλος οὐρανός to say σήμερον ἄλλη ἡμέρα because it is obvious that the day too has changed, but the verbalization of a paired concept amplifies the impact of the repeated ἄλλος on the strangeness and uniqueness of the new sky and day, thus alerting the listener to the prospect that today (σήμερον) will be unlike any other (ἄλλος). Moreover, to start the poem with ἄλλος οὐρανός produces a highly visual effect, referred to as ἐναργεία in antiquity, and maximizes the visual landscape: nothing is larger than the sky. The listener is forced to visualize a space that is both infinite and *above*. Thus, an *incipit* with ἄλλος οὐρανός may also herald the genre of the poem: epic-like, elevated and of vast proportions.

Line 2 confirms the epic impressionism of the first line: in conformity with the elevation and vastness of the sky, the reference to the ἀρχοντόπουλα about to ride their horses (καβαλλικεύσει) maintains the focalization on elevation, but extends to the politico-social sphere, i.e. the ones at the *top* of the pyramid, the young nobility. Taken linearly and in isolation from the rest of the text, the juxtaposition of lines 1 and 2 secondarily conjures up the horses of the sun, or the horses of time, to the extent that the passage of the days was coextensive with the sun riding his chariot[2]: the young aristocrats riding their horses in a new day and a new sky fractally mirrors the sun himself—repeatedly alluded to in the poem—implicitly riding his chariot in the new day and the new sky.

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[2] See The History of cartography By J. B. (John Brian) Harley, David Woodward p 266: "At Beth-Alpha, Hefzibah, a well-preserved mosaic from the early sixth century A.D. portrays the sacrifice of Isaac and also the sign of the zodiac (fig. 15.4). These are set out counterclockwise in a circle around the chariot of the sun.

The compound ἀρχοντόπουλα contains the same patronymic suffix as Ἀρμουροπούλιν, encountered later in the text, e.g. at line 15. The Komvos dictionary indicates that this suffix –πουλ- is borrowed from the Latin *pullus,* "the young of an animal," figuratively applied to humans as well, cf *kid* in English originally of goats and deer. As a noun, *pullus* specializes to πουλί 'bird' in Greek, a meaning which is already frequently attested in Classical Latin itself. It may also be, however, that the Greek patronymic –πουλ- was syncretistic in origin and also derives from Classical Greek πῶλος, cognate via Indo-European with the Latin *pullus* and the English *foal,* "young horse." πῶλος can be the young of various animals but it has a special affinity with the young of horses, i.e. "foals" or "colts." Figuratively, a πῶλος can also designate a youth, as in Bacchylides λεύκω πώλω, a poetic designation for the Dioskouroi. The metaphorical use of *pullus* and πῶλος underpins the ties between humans and animals, among which horses represented an aristocratic ideal. If Classical Greek πῶλος contributed to the formation of the patronymic –πουλ-, its equine connotation would have bestowed upon its bearer a slightly meliorative quality. Thus, the young noblemen riding their horses τὰ ἀρχοντόπουλα θέλουν καβαλλικεύσει may have horses built into their very own name.

Translation: I chose to translate ἀρχοντόπουλα as "the commanders' sons" instead of "the sons of the noblemen" to preserve the transparency of the semantic connection between ἀρχο- the noun and ἀρχω the verb "to command." I also chose

the suffix *–poulos* as "kid" (originally young goat or deer) in order to show that the patronymic was a metaphorical use of a noun originally applied to animals, not humans.

3 - μόνον τοῦ κὺρ Ἀρμούρη ὁ υἱὸς οὐδὲν καβαλλικεύει,

With line 3, lines 1 & 2 retrospectively function as a miniature priamel: the introduction of the setting followed by a statement which will act as a foil to the main subject: in contrast to the young noblemen riding their horses, the son of Lord Armoures does not fulfill an essential function of a young nobleman: riding his horse. This line alone suggests that this is a problem because if the son's father is a lord (κὺρ), one would expect him to ride a horse as well. Because the following lines eventually show the young hero riding a horse himself, line 3 can in turn be seen as a priamel to the main action of the poem, whereas line 2, in which the young noblemen ride their horses, anticipate the hero's own destiny.

The mentioning of the name *Armoures* in line 3 has also been the subject of scholarly debate. The great Byzantinist Henri Grégoire 1942: 201 sees in it a deformation of the toponym Amorion, the place of origin of the 9th century Amorian Dynasty and capital of the Anatolian theme. The dynasty included two young emperors who died in their twenties, Theophilos and Michael III, both of whom dealt devastating blows to the Arabs. Odorico accepts this possible etymology and adds that the latin loanword ἁρματά "arms" would have also played into the development of the original name, notably through the intrusion of the *–r-,* so *'Αμο(ύ)ρης > Αρμούρης. It is very likely that SA itself, as we have it, connects the name with the word "arms" at lines 72-74:

«Σαρακηνοί, **ἀρματώνεσθε**, σκυλιά, λουρικωθῆτε
λουρικωθῆτε γλήγορα, σκυλιὰ μαγαρισμένα,
εἰς ἀπιστίαν μὴ τό ῾χετε ὅτι ἀπέρασεν ὁ **Ἀρμούρης**

I endorse Grégoire's derivation of Armoures from the primary etymology of Amorion, birthplace of the Amorian dynasty and turning point in the fight against the Arabs on the Eastern Frontiers. While not denying the role the lexeme ἁρματά played in the intrusion of the rho into Armoures, I propose an alternative explanation for it, which is connected with the Amorian emperors themselves: the founder of the dynasty Michael II married an *Armenian*, Thekle, daughter of the distinguished general Bardanes Tourkos. Michael II's predecessor was himself Leo V, known as "the Armenian," which in popular memory would have readily blended with the following Amorian emperors. Leo the Armenian was himself the godfather of Michael II's son, the Amorian dynast Theophilos.

Theophilos in turn, father of Michael III, married Theodora, herself of Armenian descent, who ruled on behalf of her son up until he was sixteen. When Michael III deposed his mother, he co-ruled the empire for ten years with his Armenian uncle Bardas, whom he had appointed Kaisar. In other words, the *Amorian* dynasty was also the *Armenian* dynasty, the phonetic fusion of which produces *Armoures*. That the Armenian Amorian dynasty, led by two youthful emperors, were also victorious and belligerent, hence good at *arms,* would have effortlessly picked up the association with ἁρματά along the way. Later in this commentary, we will also explore the possible contribution to the name Armoures of the legendary 9th century emir of Melitene Umar al Aqta, known as Ἄμερ or Ἄμβρος in Byzantine sources.

Throughout most of the poem, the young hero is referred to as "the son of Armoures" rather than Armoures himself, but some lines do refer to Armoures as the

young hero himself, e.g. 141. The very title of the poem Τὸ Ἄσμα τοῦ Ἀρμούρη makes the most sense if the son himself is named Armoures, and there are versions of the lay from Cypria and Karpathos, in which the young hero is clearly named Armoures, not Arestes.

4 - Καὶ τότε πάλε τὸ παιδὶν (εἶ)'ς τὴν μάνναν του ὑπαγαίνει

The oral formula Καὶ τότε πάλε recurs numerous times throughout the poem and is widely attested in other poems as well. I have translated it as either "and then again" or "and then back" depending on the context.

5 - Μάννα, νὰ πιχαρῇς τ᾽ ἀδέλφια μου,

Stock theme of wishing a mother to rejoice in her offspring.

6 - νὰ ἰδῇς καὶ τὸν πατέρα μου, μάννα, ἂς καββαλικεύσω

Lines 4 and 6, which successively show a mother's presence with her son and a father's absence is typical of stories involving bastards. In a Cyprian version of the poem (Emmanuelle Karagiannis-Moser), the child hero is accused of being a bastard. Implicitly, Arestes' subsequent quest for his father can be construed, *inter alia*, as a quest for legitimation.

7- Καὶ τότε πάλιν ἡ μάννα τοῦ Ἀρμούρην συντυχαίνει:
uaria lectio:
Καὶ τότε πάλιν ἡ μάννα τοῦ <u>Γιαννάκην</u> συντυχαίνει.

The C ms attests Γιαννάκην in lieu of Ἀρμούρην found in the P manuscript. The fact that both variants are in the accusative debilitates the emendation committed by some editors of changing Ἀρμούρην to the genitive Ἀρμούρη for the sake of sheer consistency. As stated above, however, Armoures is also the name of the young hero himself and protagonists in any given narrative may be given several names, nicknames or epithets.

As Emmanuelle Karagiannis-Moser notes, "Yannis ou Yannakis est un personnage parallèle à Digénis" and is thus an alternative name for the archetypal hero of Greek folk songs. She adds that the name Yannis is so common that it occurs in about half of all folk songs (1997: 349). Similarly to this particular exchange in which (the son of) Armoures expresses the wish to ride a horse, the name Giannakes may be associated with horse riding, as in this song in which he sits his bride on his horse:

> Δούδει βιτσιά του **μαύρου** ντου στση ν΄φης και προβαίνει
> Κι ο **μαύρος** του χιλιμιντρά κ᾽η κόρη τον γνωρίζει.
> Ἄσ᾽ τα διαβάσματα, παπά, δάσκαλε, το ψαλτήρι,
> Γροικώ τον τον **Γιαννάκη** μου που που τραγουδεί και φτανει.
> -Την μπάντα μπάντα, δέσποτα, να ιδώ κ᾽εγώ τη νύφη.
> Κι απού τη χέρα την αρπά στο μαύρο την καθίζει.[3]

Thus, the variant Γιαννάκην, attested in the C manuscript, exemplifies the paradigmatic axis of oral poetry, in which the oral poet has at his disposal a range of different names for the same type-scene and may shift from one to another. In the process of composition, (s)he is always making choices in his mind. Even if one were to view Γιαννάκην as an interpolation, as some do, the "interpolator's" own intervention can be seen as an act of poetry, as (s)he too belongs to the community in which songs and poems are heard, composed and recomposed.

8-9«Ἐσὺ μικρὸν καὶ ἀνέλικον, καβάλλα δὲν σὲ πρέπει.
Ἀμμὴ ἂν θέλῃς, υἱὲ καλέ, διὰ νὰ καβαλλικεύσῃς,

A characteristic of heroes is their eagerness to carry out great feats normally reserved to adults at a precocious age; their eagerness immediately meets with resistance by their older relatives. We find the same pattern in *Digenes Akrites*

[3] Jeannarakis 203-204, αρ. 265 "Του σκλάβου εισ το καράβι" (A.A.117 quoted in Karagiannis-Moser 1997: 90).

whose eponym, like the young Achilles in Statius' *Achilleid,* tames or overcomes beasts while still a child (cf also *The Son of Andronikos*).

10-12 ἀπάνω κρέμεται τὸ κοντάριν τοῦ πατρός σου,
τὸ ἅρπαξεν ὁ κύρης σου ἐκ τὴν Βαβυλωνίαν,
ἀπάνω κάτω ὁλόχρυσον διὰ λίθου μαργαριτάρι·

The young hero's mother presents him with a challenge and a rite of passage which he must pass if he wants to ride a horse and have the chance to save his father: she points out to him his father's spear located ἀπάνω "up above," which we will later find out, means "upstairs." The repetition of the word ἀπάνω in a different sense in line 12 "from top to bottom, the spear is made entirely of gold encrusted with pearls" may illustrate the multifunctionality of repetitition in oral poetry. In his commentary on SA, Stylianos Alexiou emended the word in line 10 to εἰς τὸ ανώγαιον (cf Escorial 1650) on the grounds that the line as such is unmetrical, which seems too bold of a change in my view. Be that as it may, the notion of verticality is maintained between lines 10 and 12, which unconsciously perhaps, reproduces the spear's own verticality. As we enlarge our scope on the poem as a whole, an entire poetics of verticality becomes in fact manifest: the lay, we will recall, opens with the noun οὐρανός; the adverb ἀπάνω recurs in line 49 Ἀγγελικὴ φωνὴ τοῦ ἦλθεν ἐξ οὐρανοῦ ἀπάνω; line 138 Μικρὸν παιδὶν ἐφάνηκεν ἀπάνω εἰς ἄγριον ὄρος. Just as the young hero must literally and figuratively *ascend* (upstairs) to fetch his father's vertical spear, at line 150 it is another weapon—his sword—which he throws up in the *sky*, only to catch it when it falls: ᾽ς τὸν οὐρανὸν τ᾽ ἀπέταξεν, ᾽ς τὸ χέριν του τὸ ἐδέχθη. Even his other rite of passage, horseriding, involves, *mounting* his horse at line 19. When he reaches the

banks of the Euphrates, he rides *up* and down (ἀνέβη καὶ ἐκατέβη: 34). Two lines below, the taunting Saracen across the river brags of horses that are able to catch hares to overtake hares in an *uphill* race (καὶ τὸν λαγὸν (εἰ)ς τὸν ἀνήφορον ἀπὸ δρομοῦ τὸν σώνουν). Space along the river is defined as upstream (ἀνωποταμίαν: 88) or downstream (κατωποταμίαν).

As other commentators have pointed out, the father's spear happens to come from the region where he is currently held captive: Babylonia: thus, the provenience of the spear and its description are proleptic of the young hero's destination. The spear's being made of gold and pears underlines the fabulous wealth of the region, a point to which we will return later.

13-14 καὶ ἂν τὸ λυγίσῃς μιὰν φοράν, καὶ ἂν τὸ λυγίσῃς δύο,
καὶ ἂν τὸ λυγίσῃς τρεῖς φορές, τότε νὰ καβαλλικεύσῃς».

Alexiou and Ricks translate λυγίσῃς as "brandish," citing this meaning attested in Demetrakos' lexicon as one meaning among others. In agreement with Homère-Alexandre Théologitis 2002-229, however, I take λυγίσῃς more literally as "bend" as the motif seems widespread in folktales and as the task seems more heroic and apposite to the context. The counting and repetition of a task once, twice, thrice, etc., is a hallmark of oral poetry: when the character reaches a certain numerical threshold, a radical change for the better or worse takes place.

16- 17 κλαίοντας ἀνεβαίνει τὴν σκάλαν, γελῶντας κατεβαίνει.
Προτοῦ τὸ πιάσῃ ἐπιάνετον, προτοῦ τὸ σείσῃ ἐσειέτον,

The trope "antithesis" unfolds emotionally (κλαίοντας/γελῶντας), spatially (ἀνεβαίνει/κατεβαίνει), with the active/passive voice and temporally (πιάση/ἐπιάνετον, σείση/ἐσειέτον).

18-22 εἰς τὸν βραχίονα του τό ῾δεσεν/ ἔδωκεν,, ἐσείστη, ἐλυγίστη.
Καὶ τότε πάλιν τὸ παιδὶν εἰς τὴν μάνναν του ὑπαγαίνει.
«Θέλεις, θέλεις, μάννα μου, ὀμπρός σου νὰ τὸ τσακίσω;»
Καὶ τότε πάλιν ἡ μάννα του τοὺς ἄρχοντας ἐλάλει:
«Ἄμετε, ἰδέτε, οἱ ἄρχοντες, καὶ στρώσετε τὸν μαῦρον·

For line 18, the P manuscript shows ᾽δεσεν "bound" whereas C shows ἔδωκεν. Both alternatives are plausible. This and the following asyndetic ἐσείστη, ἐλυγίστη lend speed of movement to the poem. Asyndeton frequently occurs in SA and I have therefore endeavored to reflect it in my English translation. Right when the young hero is ready to break his father's spear, having bent it thrice, the scene changes abruptly and we are left wondering whether the youth broke the spear or not. It is not until line 50 when he hurls his spear into the root of a palm tree in the Euphrates that we are to assume that he was not required to break it, only bend it thrice, and that the spear he takes with him to Babylonia is that of his father, though the idiosyncratic gold and pearls on it are unspecified (τὸ κονταράκιν).

The youth's mother's ability to order the noblemen to saddle up her son's horse lends credence to Grégoire's historicizing hypothesis that (the son of) Armoures is an imperial figure, i.e. one of the youthful Armenian-Amorian dynasts: he pleads specifically for Michael III who was co-crowned emperor when he was two years old. Up until he was sixteen, Byzantium was ruled by his Armenian-born mother Theodora (in collaboration with her uncle Sergios and the minister Theoktistos). Thus, empress Theodora could be superimposed upon the wife/mother of Armoures.

lines 23-27
στρώσετε, χαλινώσετε, τὸν μαῦρον τοῦ πατρός του,
ὁποὺ ἔχει χρόνους δώδεκα, σιμὰ εἰς νερὸν οὐδὲν ἐπῆε,
ὁποὺ ἔχει χρόνους δώδεκα, οὐδὲν καβαλλικεύθη,
καὶ τρώγει τὸ καρφοπέταλον, στέκει παλουκουμένον».
᾽Εδιέβησαν οἱ ἄρχοντες καὶ στρώνουν του τὸν μαῦρον,

From other accounts of SA, we know that Armoures *père* was made prisoner by the emir of Babylonia while his wife was pregnant. We can therefore conclude that the twelve years since the horse went drinking water or was ridden upon is an indicator of Armoures *fils'* age. The use of the horse as a measure of the youth's age should be seen within the larger framework of the ancient connection between horses and heroic nobility: the horse may metonymically stand for the horseman and vice versa. The twelve miserable years the horse spent correspond to the son's twelve years of dormancy. If we accept the Armenian-Amorian dynasty hypothesis, number 12 may be particularly symbolic because it is the number of months in a year and the Byzantine emperors were emblematically tied to the sun, as Dimiter Angelo 2007:91 points out :

> The ideas of sacral rulership and the sun-emperor were cornerstones of Byzantine imperial ideology and had a long history, stretching back to late antiquity and the Hellenistic period.

28–30:

ἔδωκεν εἰς τοὺς βραχίονες του καὶ εὑρέθη καβαλλάρης.
Ὥστε νὰ εἰπῇ «ἔχετε ὑγείαν», ἐδιέβη τριάντα μίλια,
ὥστε νὰ τὸν ἐπιλογηθοῦν, ἐδιέβη ἑξῆντα πέντε.

The precise meaning of line 28 escapes me. Ricks has "with a somersault, he was on horseback" and Homère-Alexandre Théologitis 2002 "ne s'appuyant que sur ses mains, d'un bond monte en selle." Cautiously, I propose "He used his arms" for the first hemistich. Ricks' and Théologitis' translations both involve the notion of bouncing applied to ἔδωκεν εἰς τοὺς βραχίονες. Concerning the second hemistich καὶ εὑρέθη καβαλλάρης, I see the same ambiguity: while Ricks and Théologitis may both be right, at least in part, about translating καβαλλάρης as "on horseback" / "en

selle," which corresponds to Kriaras' first subheading of the word, the second subheading indicates the meaning ιππότης "horseman" and the third subheading tellingly Φεουδάρχης "feudal lord." I feel that that the phrase καὶ εὑρέθη καβαλλάρης is more than a mere physical description of some one "found on horseback" but is the successful completion of a rite of passage in which the young hero divests himself of his old identity and suddenly "becomes a horseman." To best capture the donning of his new identity while maintaining as literal a translation as possible, I rendered "and lo, in him was found a horseman!" Alexiou changes τὸν to τοῦ to restore the meter. In the same line, the C ms shows ἀπιλογηθοῦν instead of ἐπιλογηθοῦν. More will be said below on the supernatural speed of his horse and what folktale models may inspire it or interact with it.

31–32
Ἐκεῖ ἐδιὲ καὶ ἀνεβοκατέβαινε ἀντίπερα τὸν Ἀφράτην,
ἀνέβη καὶ ἐκατέβη τον, καὶ πόρον οὐδὲν εὑρίσκει.

The Euphrates river was very important in the imagination of the classical and medieval Greeks: it symbolized the border between Byzantium and the wealthy heathen land of Babylonia, which elicited ambivalent feelings of wonder. On the one hand, it was the land whence came a constant threat to the empire; on the other hand, the land beyond the Euphrates was very wealthy and civilized in many ways. Moreover, it had a mythical and primordial quality to it because it was thought that its springs arose from the Judeo-Christian paradise, as we learn from *Digenes Akrites* G7.7-9

…τοῦ Εὐφράτου.
Οὗτος δὲ πάντων ποταμὸς ὁ κάλλιστος ὑπῆρχεν,
τὴν κρήνην ἔχων ἐξ αὐτοῦ μεγάλου παραδείσου.

The Euphrates thus has "an ends-of the earth" quality and so the young Armoures' ability to reach it is an of itself a heroic feat comparable to Gilgamesh's journey to the land of Utnapishtim or Odysseus' journey to Scherie, the land of the Phaeacians. But he has not quite succeeded yet, because he *cannot* find a ford. Up to this point in the narrative, the negative οὐδὲν signals an obstacle the youth and his emblematic horse encounter, which they must and will overcome: μόνον τοῦ κὺρ Ἀρμούρη ὁ υἱὸς οὐδὲν καβαλλικεύει at line 3; ὁποὺ ἔχει χρόνους δώδεκα, σιμὰ εἰς νερὸν οὐδὲν ἐπῆε at line 24. The crossing of rivers is often portrayed as an act of heroism in ancient literature. As I have argued in a separate paper, the river Acheloios in archaic Greece was originally a multiform of the cosmic river Ocean and so Herakles' overcoming the river Acheloios following his return from Hades[4] is especially comparable to the young Armoures' struggle with crossing the Euphrates whose springs arise in paradise. The world beyond the Euphrates is almost like an otherworld, whence the son may bring back the father to life. The young hero's difficulty in crossing the river is commensurate with what is at stake.

33 Σαρακηνὸς ἐστέκετον, στέκει, ἀναγελᾷ τον:

It has often been remarked upon that the portrayal of this Saracen as well as of that of the one who steals the hero's horse are typologically comparable to the portrayal of Saracens in *La Chanson de Roland.*

34-40 Σαρακηνοὶ ἔχουσιν φαρία, ὁποὺ διώχνουν τοὺς ἀέρες,
τὴν φάσαν καὶ τὴν πέρδικα ἀπὸ πτεροῦ τὴν παίρνουν,
καὶ τὸν λαγὸν (εἶ)ς τὸν ἀνήφορον ἀπὸ δρομοῦ τὸν σώνουν,

[4] "Zenodotos' Athetesis of *Iliad* 21.194: Far-reaching Implications to our Understanding of Cosmology in the *Iliad,*" 2010. Available upon request.

κρατοῦν καὶ κολακεύουν τα καὶ ἐλεύθερα τὰ ἀφίνουν,
καὶ πάλε δὲ ὅταν τοὺς φανῇ, τρέχουσιν, πιάνουσίν τα,
καὶ τὸν Ἀφράτην ποταμὸν οὐκ ἠμποροῦν περᾶσαι,
καὶ ἐσὺ μὲ τὸ παρίππιν σου θέλεις νὰ τὸν περάσῃς;»

While on the one hand this passage can be characterized as a taunt scene which frequently occur in heroic poetry, at the same time it enhances the youth's worth when he finally does cross the river because the listener/reader is made aware of how difficult it is for even the best horses to cross the Euphrates. Two details: in line 37, manuscript C has καὶ πάλι ἐξαπολοῦν τα in the second hemistich instead of καὶ ἐλεύθερα τὰ ἀφίνουν of ms P; the reference in the previous line to the Saracens' horses ability to overtake hares in a race uphill is especially significant because hares run much faster uphill than downhill, contrary to what one might expect.[5]

41 - Τὸ νὰ τ᾽ ἀκούσῃ ὁ νεώτερος πολλὴν μανίαν ἐπῆρεν·

Achilles has his μῆνιν, Armoures the younger his μανίαν at line 41, such is a widespread characteristic of heroes, the hero's anger.

42 -πτερνιστηρέαν τὸν μαῦρον του, διὰ νὰ περάσῃ πέρα.

περάσῃ πέρα is a nice figura etymologica, which I have attempted to mirror in English with the translation "ford the ford."

43–44 Ἦταν ὁ Ἀφράτης δυνατός, ἦτον καὶ βουρκωμένος,
εἶχεν καὶ κύματα βαθέα, ἦτον καὶ ἀποχυμένος,

κύματα βαρέα "grievous waves," most editors have followed Kyriakides' emendation κύματα βαθέα "deep waves" despite the absence of manuscript evidence. I

[5] In a personal communication (05/29/2010), I am informed by Kyungsub Lee, an experienced hunter from Illinois, that rabbits run much faster uphill than downhill where they are easier to catch. Presumably, hares too.

follow S. Alexiou, however, in his opinion that Kyriakides' emendation is possible, but it is not necessary.

45 - πτερνιστηρέαν τὸν μαῦρον του κρούει τον καὶ ὑπάγει, 45

This line is missing from the C manuscript: it occurs only in the P manuscript.

46 - **στριγγιὰν φωνὴν ἀνέσυρεν, ὅσην καὶ ἂν ἐδυνέτον**

This formula, which recurs several times in SA, is reminiscent of the Homeric formula βοὴν ἀγαθὸς "good at the war cry, e.g. *Iliad* 5.347 τῇ δ' ἐπὶ μακρὸν ἄϋσε βοὴν ἀγαθὸς Διομήδης.

47-48 Εὐχαριστῶ σε, Θεὲ καλέ, καὶ μυριοευχαριστῶ σε,
ἐσὺ μὲ ἐδῶκες τὴν ἀνδρείαν καὶ μὲ τὴν παίρνει τώρα».

The C ms attests a longer unmetrical variant, which, however, disambiguates the subject of παίρνει: ἐσὺ μὲ ἐδῶκες τὴν ἀνδρείαν καὶ ὁ ἀβάης μὲ τὴν παίρνει τώρα "you gave me manliness and the unfordable takes it away from me now." The youth's gratitude to God at this moment may seem a little strange because he is in a bad predicament. Is it ironic? Is it meant, rather, to ingratiate himself with God so that he may now get his help. Ricks compares the *Cid* in which a similar situation occurs and sees it as "Christian resignation and righteous determination." Noteworthy in *SA* 48 is the opposition here between God and the Euphrates river.

49 - Ἀγγελικὴ φωνὴ τοῦ ἦλθεν ἐξ οὐρανοῦ ἀπάνω:

The C ms provides this alternative reading: ἀγγελικὴν φωνίτσαν ἤκουσεν…

50 - μπῆξε τὸ κονταράκιν σου 'ς τῆς φοινικέας τὴν ρίζαν

The P manuscript attests Καὶ μπῆξε τὸ κοντάρι σου εἰς τὴν φοινικέαν τὴν ρίζαν, which is problematic according to S. Alexiou because he says the first word uttered by

the angel cannot begin with καὶ. On the other hand, Alexiou claims that κονταράκιν is a late hypocoristic form.

A constellation of elements in lines 43-50 are mirrored in *Digenes Akrites* E1534-1538

> Τὸν γρίβα μου ἐπιλάλησα τὸν ποταμὸν περάσει,
> Καὶ εἶχεν νερὸν ὁ ποταμὸς πολὺν καὶ **βουρκωμένον**
> Καὶ ἐξέπεσεν ὁ γρίβας μου καὶ ἐχώθην ἕως τραχήλου.
> Καὶ **δένδρον** ἔπεψεν ὁ **Θεὸς ἀπέσω εἰς τὸ ποτάμιν,**
> Καὶ ἄν εἶχεν λείπειν τὸ δενδρόν, ἐνίγετον ὁ Ἀκρίτης.

The hero urges his horse, the river too is muddy, a tree is in the middle of it, and God's invocation and subsequent intervention. We may also compare SA 43-50 to *DA* G5.30-33 and G5.58-59:

> **Δἐνδρον** ὁρῶ ἀπόμηκα πρὸς τὴν δασέαν βάλτον
> Καὶ τὴν **φάραν ἐπιλαλῶ** νομίσας ὕδωρ ἔχειν
> Καὶ ουδαμῶς ἀπέτυχον **φοῖνιξ** δὲ ἦν τὸ δένδρον
> Καὶ ἐκ τῆς **ῥίζης** θαυμαστὴ ἀνεπέμπετο βρύσις.
>
> Καὶ τὴν μὲν φάραν ἔδησα εἰς τοῦ δένδρου τὸν κλῶνα,
> Τὸ δὲ **κοντάριν** ἔστησα μέσον αὐτοῦ τῆς **ῥίζης**

The hero urges his horse, the water is presumably muddy because it's near a swamp and there is a palm tree (near a spring), in whose roots the hero plants his spear. The context of *DA* G5 shows that Digenes is dying of thirst, so the palm tree, as in *SA*, is associated with salvation. The act of planting a spear into the root of a tree may have a more elusive meaning or symbolism: it is perhaps meant to regenerate the spear, also known as δόρυ 'wood', by allowing it to draw nutrients from the root of a tree, thus tying its back to its origins and transforming the spear back into a tree. This thematic throwback on origins coheres with the location of the palm tree in *DA* by a *spring* and the proximity of the Euphrates to the springs of paradise.

57-60
Εἰπέ, μωρὲ Σαρακηνέ, ποῦ ἔναι τὰ φουσσᾶτα;»
Καὶ τότε ὁ Σαρακηνὸς τοῦ Ἀρμούρη συντυχαίνει:

Θεέ μου, σαλὰ ρωτήματα, τὰ ἔχουν οἱ ἀνδρειωμένοι,
πρῶτα νὰ κροῦν τὲς σφονδυλεὲς καὶ τότε νὰ ρωτοῦσιν.

This dialogue is interesting for the reciprocity of the slurs the youth and the Saracen exchange: the former calls the latter μωρὲ "stupid" and the latter σαλὰ "foolish." The Saracen is presumably stupid because he underestimated the youth's ability to cross the river and be the recipient of God's favor; the youth is presumably foolish because, acting like many discourteous men of action, he attacks first and asks questions later. Thus, the Saracen is granted a certain degree of sagacity and is not overly schematized and demonized. His exclamation θεέ μου "my God" may be more than a stock phrase, as it counterbalances the young Armoures' invocation of God, thus adding to the parallelism between them, alongside their mutual charge of idiocy. Moreover, Θεέ μου could possibly be a realistic translation of an Arabic interjection involving the word "Allah."

61 - Μὰ τὸν κὺρ ἥλιον τὸν γλυκύν, μὰ τὴν γλυκεῖαν του μάννα,

This formulaic line occurs repeatedly throughout *SA.* Its referentiality is most likely multilayered. It appears here in the mouth of a Saracen but the young hero later in the poem uses it as well. First, it may reflect the continuation of pre-Christian solar cults such as that of Apollo, Horus and Mithra that are legitimated and rationalized by Christian (and possibly Muslim) authorities through a metaphorical interpretation: the Lord Sun stands for Jesus Christ and his mother the Virgin Mary. Interestingly, *DA* too calls the sun "Lord" and associates him with the figure of a female relative: in Escorial 94, Digenis' uncles ask the sun why he has wronged them (Κὺρ Ἥλιε, τί μᾶς ἔποικες καὶ ἐκακοδίκησές μας;); in Grottaferrata, Digenes' mother is repeatedly referred to as "the daughter of the sun," e.g. 4.350 (τὴν ἡλιογεννημένην).

Second, as a result of the first factor or even in part independently of it, the Greek Orthodox church promoted a solar representation of Christ. Third, in a hypostatic relation with the first two divine models, the Byzantine Emperor was assimilated to the sun, as stated above. At an unconscious nonetheless pervasive level, this formulaic line replicates the relationship between Armoures *fils* and his mother, which the lay's *incipit* thematizes and foregrounds. More will be said below on a solar interpretation of Armoures *fils'* expedition into Babylonia and liberation of Armoures.

62-65 ἐψὲς ἐξεδιαλέχθημεν κἂν ἑκατὸν χιλιάδες,
ὅλοι καλοὶ καὶ ἐκλεκτοὶ πρασινοσκουταρᾶτοι,
ἔνι καὶ ἄνδρες δυνατοὶ οὐδὲ χιλίους φοβοῦνται,
οὐδὲ χιλίους, οὐδὲ μυρίους, οὐδὲ ὅσοι τοὺς ἀπαντήσουν».

Concerning the first word of line 64, I chose the ἔνι of the C manuscript over the ἔναι of the P ms, following S. Alexiou's assertion that the former is historically older than the latter.

There may be an intertextual dialogue between *SA* 62-65 and a very similar scene in *DA* E1319-1324, in which Philopappous tells two brave youths how disheartened he is that Digenes has defeated them, though earlier along the Euphrates, the three of them had defeated five thousand men:

> Πῶς ἐσυνέβην εἰς ἐμᾶς καὶ ἀτιμώθη ἡ ἀνδρεία μας΄
> Εἰσ τὸν Ἀφράτην ποταμόν, κάτω εἰς τὸ Σαμουσάτο,
> πἐντε χιλιάδες ηῦραν μας καὶ οὐ κατεχώρισάν μας
> καῖ πάλιν ἐκρατοῦμαν τους, κανεὶς οὐκ ἐντραλίσθην
> καὶ αὐτο`ς ὡς ἦτον μοναχός, πεζὸς μὲ τὸ καλίκιν
> καὶ μὲ τὸ μοναμπλούτσικον, καὶ πῶς μᾶς εἶχεν τρέψειν;

Whereas three men defeat five thousand men along the Euphrates in *DA,* the young Armoures alone ups the ante and defeats a hundred thousand of them along the same

river, or twenty times the amount.

Théologitis states that the green color of the Muslim warriors' bucklers at 63 in SA relates to the fact that green is the color of Muslim saints. Similarly, in *DA* G6, when Digenes crosses the Euphrates (Περάσας οὖν … τὸν ποταμὸν Εὐφράτην: 727), he confronts the Penthesileia-like female warrior Maximou whose turban too is green (φακεολίτζιν πράσινον: 737) and whose spear is Arabic (κοντάριν ἀραβίτικον: 739). Théologitis does not cite this comparandum from *DA,* but it seems to corroborate his connection of the Saracens' green bucklers in *SA* and the color of Muslim saints: though Maximou is not patently Muslim (she wears no veil, is single and never says of word of Islam), the color of her turban in conjunction with her Arabic sword does seem to make her look as though she too is a Muslim saint.

72-73 Σαρακηνοί, ἁρματώνεσθε, σκυλιά, λουρικωθῆτε
λουρικωθῆτε γλήγορα, σκυλιὰ μαγαρισμένα,

Emmanuelle Karagiannis-Moser, who's written an entire article on the insult σκυλιά in popular Greek songs, says that it appears in 2% of songs, "chiffre tout à fait considérable."[6]

74-75 εἰς ἀπιστίαν μὴ τό ῾χετε ὅτι ἀπέρασεν ὁ Ἀρμούρης
ὁ Ἀρμουρόπουλος, τοῦ Ἀρμούρη ὁ υἱός, ὁ Ἄρεστης, ὁ ἀνδρειωμένος»

Here, for the first time in the text, the name of *Arestes* as that of the young hero appears in the text. Grégoire is of the opinion that the name stems from that of Orestes, a famous general under the reign of Basil II, who successfully fought against the Arabs and crossed the Euphrates. Grégoire's explanation is plausible, but there may be more to it

[6] ῾Σκυλιά! Une contribution à l'étude du bestiaire néo-hellénique" *R.E.N.* T.II, 1993, p 125-144 quoted in Karagiannis-Moser 1997: 169

than that. According to the *Etymologicum Magnum*, the noun ἀρεστής is a variant of ἀρεστήρ, glossed as:

> **Ἀρεστήρ:** Εἶδος πλακοῦντος, τοῖς θεοῖς ἀφιερωμένος, ὥσπερ καὶ τὸ πόπανον· παρὰ τὸ ἀρέσκω, ὁ τοῖς θεοῖς ἀρέσκων. Ἀρέσω οὖν, ὁ παρακείμενος, ἤρεσμαι, **ἀρεστὴς** καὶ ἀρεστὴρ, ὡς ἤθληται, ἀθλητὴς καὶ ἀθλητήρ. *(55)*

Thus, the name of Arestes may have had ritualistic resonances, which requires further investigation. As an etymological cognate of ἀραρίσκω and ἀρεστός, the meaning of Arestes could have denoted or connoted "the Fitting one" or "the Pleasant one." Finally, the phonetic similarity with ἄριστος "the best" could have also been a factor. Nevertheless, the inclusion of the name Arestes in *SA* is also problematic: as S. Alexiou 1985: 167 points out, the name occurs in "hypermetric positions" (εἶναι ὑπέρμετρη) in both the C and P manuscripts: I diffidently selected the P reading in my edition ὁ Ἀρμουρόπουλος, τοῦ Ἀρμούρη ὁ υἱός, ὁ Ἀρευστης, ὁ ἀνδρειωμένος, whose Ἀρευστης I hesitantly emended to Ἀρεστης in conformity with most editors, on the grounds of the upsilon-less form occurring in the P ms at line 142. Kyriakides, however, was not satisfied with the removal of the upsilon and instead proposed emending Ἀρευστης to ρέκτης[7] "the doer, the achiever." As a result, the name Arestes would not appear at all in line 75 of the P manuscript, regardless of the hypermetric issue. In the C manuscript (again hypermetrically) on the other hand, the name Arestes is clearly included in line 75—ὁ Ἀρμούρης ὁ Ἀρμουρόπουλος τ᾽ Ἀρμούρη ὁ υἱὸς ὁ Ἀρέστης—but the previous line ends in ἐπέρασεν ὁ Γιαννάκης instead of P's ἀπέρασεν ὁ Ἀρμούρης**.** If for the sake of the argument, we envisage the scenario that no interpolation took place in lines 74 &

[7] quoted in S. Alexiou 1985: 183.

75 of the C ms, the occurrence of Ἀρέστης in 75 besides Γιαννάκης in 74 is semantically soluble as an honorific title, not a name, (and so is Ἀρμούρης) hence the translation:

> …Yannakis crossed the river
> the Armenian-Amorian one, the Armenian-Amorian's kid, the son of the Armenian-Amorian one, the Fitting one.

83-91 Πτερνιστηρέαν τὸν μαῦρον του, ἐκεῖ κοντὰ ζυγώνει:
«Ἀπὸ τὸ γένος διαβῶ, ἂν σᾶς ἀλησμονήσω».
Καὶ συγκροτάει πόλεμου καλὰ, ἀνδρειωμένα,
τὲς ἄκρες, ἄκρες ἔκοπτε, ἡ μέση ἐδαπανᾶτον.
Μὰ τὸν κὺρ ἥλιον τὸν γλυκύν, μὰ τὴν γλυκεῖαν του μάννα,
ὅλη μέρα τοὺς ἔκοπτε τὴν ἀνωποταμίαν,
καὶ ὅλη νύκτα τοὺς ἔκοπτε τὴν κατωποταμίαν.
Ἔθεσε καὶ ἀποθέσεν τους, κανέναν δὲν ἀφῆκε.
Ἀπέζεψε ὁ νεώτερος νὰ τὸν βαρήσῃ ὁ ἀέρας,

It is on his black horse that (the) Armoures slaughters a hundred thousand Saracens. Of course, the scene is completely unrealistic, but a contemporary audience could bear in mind the traditional depiction of Death as a horseman, which in the minds of contemporary Greeks could be very real, e.g. Είδα τον Χάρο κ᾽ ἐτρεχε στους κάμπους καβαλάρης.[8] It is as though the youth becomes Death on horseback. The setting of a river, which is highly liminal, enhances the horse's identity as the animal, which "apparaît comme un lien entre les deux mondes dans plusieurs chansons et de manières diverses. Le cheval remplit une fonction de héraut de la mort."[9]

Another aspect of the connection between the horse and the horseman is the young age of the hero, described as "a small child" in line 148 (Μικρὸν παιδὶν ἐφάνηκεν ἀπάνου εἰς ἄγριον ὄρος). Children did not typically ride horses, so what may be a model or inspiration for the fantasy of a child on horseback? Festivals and rituals.

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[8] Evlambios 8, Ειδήσεις από τον Ἅδη (P.292 CCCCX) quoted in Karagiannis-Moser 1985:281.

[9] Karagiannis-Moser 1997:274:

Karagiannis-Moser says that children are practically never on horseback, with two exceptions: in the songs of festivals known as κάλαντα, in wishes and in lullabies (νανάρισμα). In 1997:86, she cites Phardys 178 Corse “"Του Λαζάρου και των Βαίων":

> Αν έχουν θυλυκό παιδί, καλά να το παντρ΄ψουν
> Κι αν έχουν σερνικό παιδί, στο γρίζο καβελάρης
> Να σειέται, να λυγίζεται απάνω τσ᾽ αλογάρι.

Thus, several festivals throughout the calendar year promoted the fantasy of a child on horseback.

92-98: καὶ ἕνα Σαρακηνὸ σκυλίν, σκυλὶν μαγαρισμένον,
ἐγκρύμματα τὸν ἔβαλεν καὶ ἐπῆρε του τὸν μαῦρον,
ἐγκρύμματα τὸν ἔβαλε καὶ ἐπῆρε τὸ ραβδίν του.
Μὰ τὸν κὺρ ἥλιον γλυκύν, μὰ τὴν γλυκείαν του μάννα,
σαράντα μίλια τὸν ἐδίωχνε πεζὸς μὲ τὰ γονάτια,
καὶ ἄλλα σαράντα τέσσαρα πεζὸς μὲ τὸ λουρίκιμ,
ἐκεῖ τὸν ἐκατέφθασε εἰς τῆς Συρίας τὴν πόρταν,
καὶ ἐβγαίνει τὸ σπαθίτσι του καὶ παίρνει του τὸ χέριν:

The Saracen’s laying an ambush to Armoures compares with the Saracen’s laying an ambush to Roland in *La Chanson de Roland.* His transformation into a one-handed figure who then reports back to the emir and reiterates significant swaths of the narrative has led him to be historically identified as Umar al Aqta, the emir of Melitene, whose nickname al Aqta "the one-handed" dovetails the figure of the one-handed Saracen in *SA*.[10] His numerous attacks in central Anatolia, after protracted battles, were put to an end during the last years of the reign of Armenian Amorian dynast Michael III in 863 when he was killed, thus marking a major victory to the Byzantines in their struggle against the Arabs. Known in Byzantine sources as Ἄμερ or Ἄμβρος, Beloudes proposed that the name of Armoures stems from it through the existence of “a lay of the

[10] Beck in Thanopoulos 1990: 22.

Emir," as attested in *DA* G1.[11] The hypothesis is enticing, as oral traditions may readily turn formidable enemies into formidable heroes. I accept it as having contributed to the name of Armoures, in addition to the Amorian and Armenian connections. Alongside the Umar al Aqta connection, S. Alexiou points out that it was customary in Byzantium and the Arab world to cut the hands off of thieves.

100–103 Ὁ κύρης του ἔξω κάθητο εἰς τῆς φυλακῆς τὴν πόρταν,
τὸν μαῦρον του ἀνεγνώρισεν καὶ τὸ ραβδὶν τοῦ υἱοῦ του,
τὸν καβαλλάρην οὐδὲν θωρεῖ καὶ πὰ νὰ βγῇ ἡ ψυχή του.
Βαρέα βαρέα ἀναστέναξεν καὶ ἐσείστη ὁ πύργος ὅλος.

The appearance of an empty horse is a traditional motif in the announcement of its rider's death in Greek folktales.[12] The grief of a father for his son thought dead is attested as early as the Homeric *Odyssey* in which Laertes languishes in his garden thinking that his son Odysseus is dead.

126-127: Καὶ τότε πάλιν ὁ ἀμιρᾶς τοῦ κουτζοχέρη ἐλάλει:
«Εἰπές, μωρὲ Σαρακηνέ, ποῦ ἔναι τὰ φουσσᾶτα;»

The emir calling the cripple a "stupid Saracen" (μωρὲ Σαρακηνέ) may illustrate the limits and at times overly mechanistic nature of oral poetry: earlier in the poem (57), it was predictable and natural that the young hero should call the Saracen who taunted him "stupid," but it makes much less that the Emir—himself a Saracen—should call his fellow Saracen "stupid," as if he were resorting to an ethnic slur against his own people.

167-168: Καὶ τότε πάλιν ὁ ἀμιρᾶς τὸν Ἀρμούρην ἐλάλει:
«Καλὰ εἶναι αὐτά, ὁ Ἀρμούρης μου, τὰ κάμνει ὁ υἱός σου;»

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[11] Quoted in Thanopoulos 1990:22.

[12] Karagiannis-Moser 1997:275.

In spite of 126-127, the Emir is given a consistent, well-defined personality in *SA*: earlier, his initial request to have Armoures *père* given a better treatment after he hears him groan in jail is derisive and ironic. Here, the Emir addresses Armoures *père* with a rhetorical question as to whether he's proud of what his son has done. In other words, irony is a trope the emir is fond of using. When later in the lay, he finds out that Armoures *fils* is a terrible threat to his kingdom and himself, it is highly ironic from a narrative standpoint that he should reiterate his request that his father be given a better treatment (bath, eating with the emir, etc.), this time sincerely. It is characteristic of oral poetry that entire passages can be repeated in a given text, except that the tone or connotative intent of said passage has changed.

Καὶ τότε πάλιν ὁ Ἀρμούρης μου ὡραῖον χαρτίτζιν γράφει, 169
μὲ τὸ πουλὶν τὸ ἔστειλεν, τ᾽ ὡραῖον χιλιδονάκι: 170
«Εἰπὲ τῆς σκύλας τὸν υἱόν, τῆς ἀνομίας τὸ τέκνον, 171
ὅπου εὕρῃ Σαρακηνὸν νὰ τὸν ἐλεημονᾶται, 172
μὴ λάχῃ εἰς τὰς χεῖρας τους καὶ ἐλεημοσύν᾽ οὐκ ἔχει». 173
Καὶ τότε πάλιν τὸ παιδὶν ὡραῖον χαρτίτζιν γράφει, 174
μὲ τὸ πουλὶν τὸ ἔστειλεν, τὸ ὡραῖον χιλιδονάκιν: 175

Theologitis believes that the insults the father hurls at his son in his letter should not be taken literally, but are rather apotropaic and affectionate: the father admires his son and wishes to protect him. But he is a afraid to provoke the envy of the heavens, and for this reason, has recourse to slurs. Moreover, this phenomenon is still attested in contemporary Greece. The son, on his part, proves that he does not feel insulted because the tone of his response is very respectful.[13]

[13] 2002: 220 (my translation from the French).

Another way of looking at Armoures' letter to his son, without necessarily excluding the apotropaic explanation, is ironically. Everything the father says to his son can be construed as meaning the opposite of what he literally says: the youth is not a bastard and he is not to spare the soul of a single Saracen.[14] The imprisoned father is now beating the emir at his own game. A third of way of looking at it is naturally that of a man in detention forced to write an insincere message so blatantly favorable to his detainers that its recipient will easily know it was written under compulsion.

As regards the conveyor of the message, the swallow, it is most frequently associated with the return of spring. The bird may therefore presage a happy ending for the father and the son. Given the connection between the Byzantine and the cycle of the sun, the young hero's journey into Babylonia beyond the Euphrates and delivery of his father could be superimposed on the advent of winter and struggle with the forces of darkness. The father's emancipation may symbolize the return of life in the spring.

195-200 καὶ παίδευε καὶ τὸ παιδίν, γαμπρὸν τὸν θέλω πάρει(ν),
οὐδὲ εἰς τὴν ἀνεψίαν μου, οὐδὲ εἰς τὴν ἐξαδέλφην,
μόνον εἰς τὴν θυγατέρα μου, τὴν ἔχω φῶς καὶ μάτια.
Καὶ παίδευέ το τὸ παιδίν ὅπου καὶ ἂν εὕρῃ Σαρακηνόν,
νὰ τὸν ἐλεημονᾶται, καὶ ἂν λάχῃ κέρδος τίποτες,
ἀντάμα νὰ τὸ μοιράζουν, καὶ νά ʿναι ἀγαπημένοι».

The open ending of the poem leaves the listener/reader with the task of imagining the events to follow. The emir's promise may be seen as an elaborate yet desperate move to save himself from imminent destruction. Whether or not Armoures *fils* will accept his offer is another question.

[14] In a Cyprian version of *SA,* Armoures father turns against the Saracens when he hears the news of his son's arrival and together father and son fight the Saracens (Karagiannis-Moser 1997: 62).

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